

# GIFFORD PINCHOT

**G**IFFORD Pinchot, America's first professionally trained forester, rose to national prominence as a conservationist and political progressive under the patronage of President Theodore Roosevelt. Equally noteworthy was his election twice as Republican governor of Pennsylvania. As a politician he fought for wiser use of natural resources and for fuller justice for the average citizen. His struggle for reform, particularly with leaders in his own party, made him a center of continual controversy.

Pinchot, born to wealth on August 11, 1865, at his family's summer home in Connecticut, chose to earn his ample inheritance by working for the betterment of society. After studying at Yale, he furthered his education at a French forestry school, where he learned the value of selective rather than unrestrained harvesting of forests.

In 1898, Pinchot was appointed chief of the Division of Forestry (later the Bureau) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, a recognition of his advanced training in forestry and the need to protect American forests. In 1905, the Bureau was given control of the national forest reserves, and was renamed the Forest Service. President Roosevelt, a fellow Republican whom Pinchot greatly admired, allowed him considerable independence in the administration of the Service. Pinchot in turn imparted to his staff a spirit of diligence and a sense of mission.

It was Roosevelt and Pinchot who gave the

name "conservation" to the movement for the preservation and wise use of all natural resources. They observed what they considered to be the reckless exploitation of these resources for private profit, and they predicted that unless scientific management of resources was required, America would fail to meet its future needs. Under Pinchot, the Forest Service added

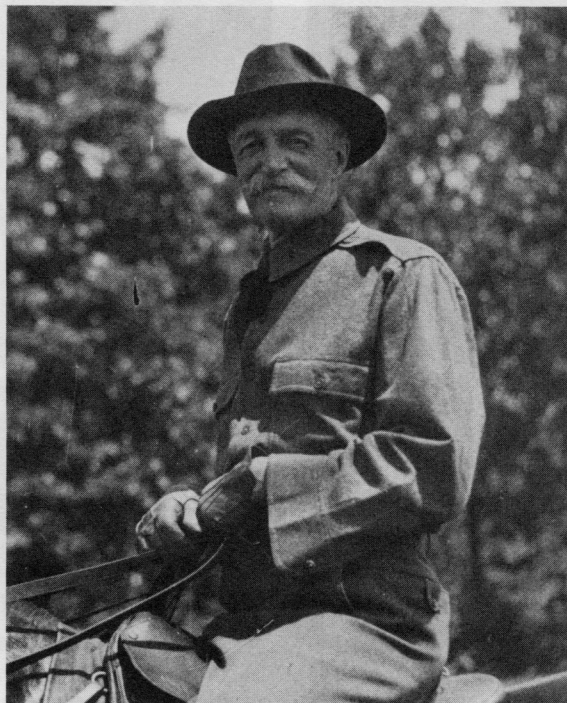
millions of acres to the national forests, controlled their use, and regulated their harvest.

Roosevelt's Republican successor, President Taft, lacked enthusiasm for government ownership of land. This was one of the questions that divided Roosevelt and Taft in 1912, and led to the formation of the Progressive party, with Roosevelt as its presidential candidate. Pinchot supported the new party, which proposed such radical reforms as the regulation of child labor, a minimum wage for women, and unemployment insurance.

After Roosevelt's defeat,

Pinchot strove in vain to keep the party from dissolving.

In 1914, Pinchot ran for the United States Senate as a Progressive against the incumbent, Boies Penrose, who managed the Republican organization in Pennsylvania. Pinchot campaigned for women's right to vote; prohibition of the sale and use of alcoholic beverages; a graduated income tax—a tax to be determined by the ability to pay; workers' compensation for injuries on the job; recognition of labor unions



*Gifford Pinchot during his second term as governor.*

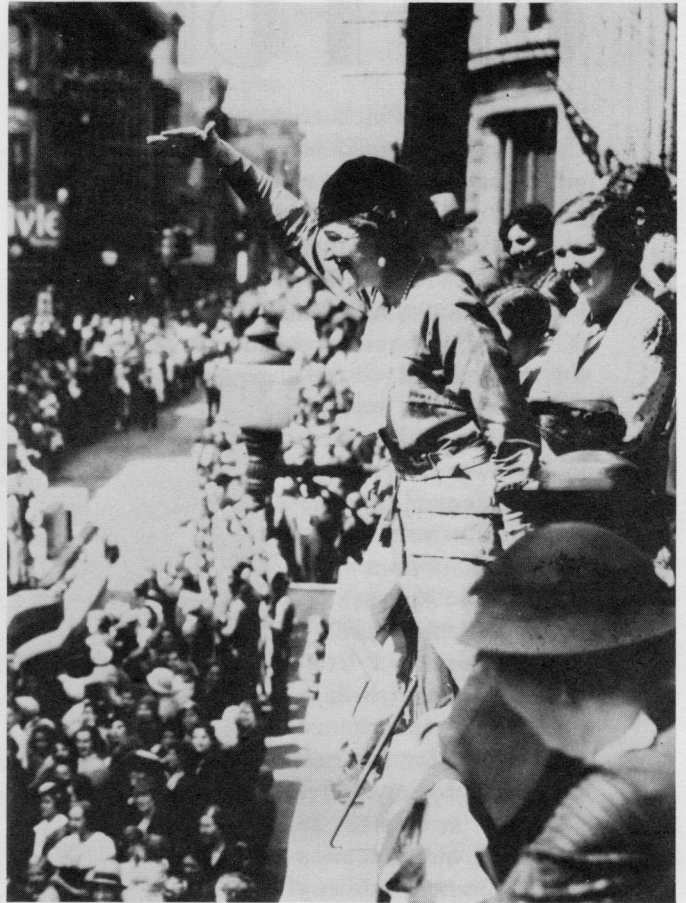
for collective bargaining; and other radical-for-the-time reforms.

During his unsuccessful campaign, Pinchot married Cornelia Bryce, daughter of a wealthy and prominent family, and they had a son, Gifford Bryce Pinchot. Mrs. Pinchot's boundless energy and crusading spirit matched her husband's. She addressed housewives demanding the vote and factory workers and miners seeking justice; she marched in picket lines; and she presided as hostess at frequent receptions. Mrs. Pinchot not only campaigned for her husband but unsuccessfully sought election three times to Congress and once to the governorship.

After his campaign, Pinchot promoted American involvement in the European war and opposed President Wilson's neutrality. The Progressives had returned to their old parties, and Pinchot, who was in opposition to the President, reluctantly rejoined the Republicans. Upon Wilson's re-election in 1916, Pinchot turned from national to State politics.

In 1920, Governor Sproul appointed him Commissioner of Forestry, in which position he initiated administrative changes and refused to grant political patronage. His goal, however, was the governorship, where he believed he would have greater opportunity to bring about the reforms he proposed. His campaign for that office, in 1922, concentrated on reforms that could arouse the greatest popular support—government reorganization and economy, enforcement of prohibition, and regulation of public utilities. To achieve a broader electoral base and gain the support of Joseph Grundy, president of the Pennsylvania Manufacturers' Association and a political power in the State, he played down some of his earlier proposals for reform. Aiding him too was the fact that Republican leaders were divided over a replacement for party chief Boies Penrose, who had recently died.

Pinchot won a close election. The new Governor, however, had no intention of being absorbed by the bosses, through what he termed the "amoeba treatment," and stubbornly persisted with his reforms, often annoying his sup-



*Mrs. Pinchot waves after addressing an assembly of miners in Uniontown, April, 1934.*

porters as well as hardening his opponents. He began his administration by tightening State spending. Typically, he took but a portion of his salary. He persuaded the Assembly to pass an administrative code. This standardized salaries and gave the Governor power to reorganize the executive branch of government and reduce duplication by combining 139 agencies into fifteen departments and three commissions. A pension system was also introduced, to be financed by the employees and the State.

Gathering public support through the adoption of these measures, the Governor made further proposals. He asked the Assembly to pass



legislation to enforce the federal prohibition of alcoholic beverages. Only one bill passed, however, and money for enforcement had to be obtained from the Women's Christian Temperance Union, since the Legislature would not appropriate the funds.

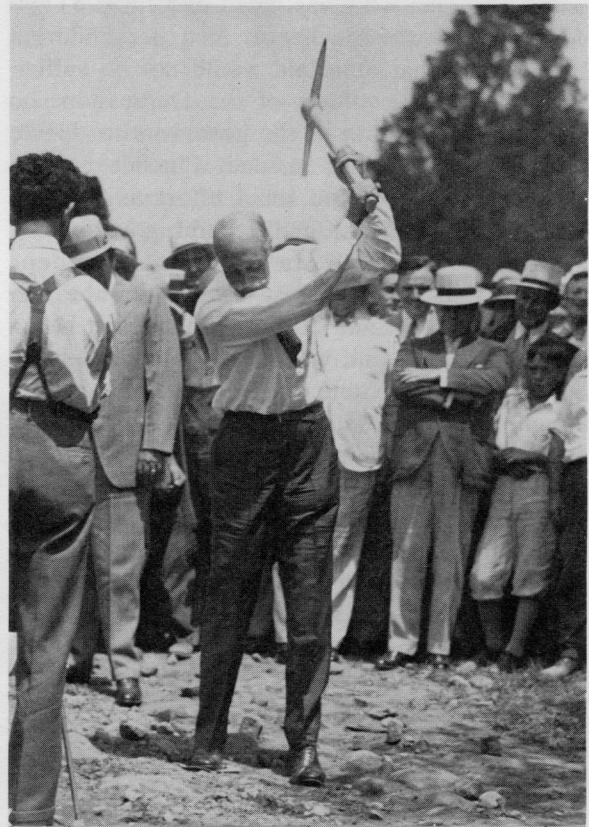
Always a strong adversary of the public utilities, he proposed now that the Assembly connect electric companies into a tightly regulated State-wide system with combined facilities. This would forestall the creation of private monopolies, lessen the cost of electricity for the user, and extend service to all, particularly to farmers. The Governor's plans were dashed when utility lobbyists defeated nineteen of his bills in Assembly.

The miners of anthracite coal struck twice during his first term of office. The first strike, in 1923, lasted only a week due to Pinchot's decisive arbitration. The strike of 1925 continued for six months and again Pinchot's forceful mediation was necessary. President Coolidge, cautious about government intervention in such a matter, remained aloof. Annoyed by the inactivity of the President, Pinchot called both sides for daily meetings, finally achieving a compromise.

The Governor retired from office at the end of his term, having improved the efficiency and economy of State government. His enthusiasm had affected his subordinates, creating an *esprit de corps* among them.

Following another unsuccessful attempt to make him the Republican candidate for the U.S. Senate, the Pinchots took a seven-month cruise of the South Seas. Pinchot, author of several books, wrote one about the voyage. (The scientists aboard the ex-governor's schooner found a new species of fish, which they named *binthosema pinchoti*.)

In 1930, Pinchot won election to a second term as governor. There he battled for the regulation of public utilities, relief for the unemployed, and construction of paved roads to "get the farmers out of the mud." For two years, he and the Assembly fought over the utilities issue. The Governor went straight to the people through



*Governor Pinchot swings a pick to begin the paving of twenty thousand miles of Pinchot roads.*

the newspapers, radio, and the mail. Although the House passed three bills to regulate rates, the Senate sided with the utilities and the proposals were defeated. He also placed his own men on the Public Service Commission, which he then sought to control, and through it the utilities. Pinchot believed in "the principle of Theodore Roosevelt that it is the duty of a public servant to do whatever the public good requires unless it is directly forbidden by Law."

The Depression hit Pennsylvania severely, and by 1931 there were almost a million unemployed. The Governor took a personal concern for the needy. Before taking office he founded a committee on unemployment. He gave more immediate assistance also, such

as to a woman who was jailed and fined \$17.90 for killing a woodpecker to feed her children.

Realizing that State aid would not be sufficient to curb the effects of the Depression, he was one of the first of the governors to decide that federal aid was needed. Pinchot gave a moralistic tone to the relief effort as he continually urged State and federal governments to aid the deprived. In response, President Hoover and the Congress established the Reconstruction Finance Corporation to assist banks and businesses, and eventually extended direct aid to the states. State and federal funds for the unemployed were distributed on a non-partisan basis by the Pennsylvania State Emergency Relief Board.

Governor Pinchot recognized other neglected groups in Pennsylvania. Women, Jews, and blacks were included in his administration. "Pinchot Roads" were promoted for the benefit of the farmer to transport his product to the consumer. Economical, but adequate, means were devised to pave twenty thousand miles of road. A limited amount of machinery was used so that more work could be given to the unemployed. This was probably the accomplishment for which Pinchot was best remembered.

In 1933, the bituminous coal miners at U.S. Steel's "captive mines" struck. The mine owners refused to recognize the United Mine Workers union, despite federal law requiring collective bargaining. The National Guard was called in but admonished by Pinchot to remain neutral.

Pressure exerted by Pinchot and President Franklin D. Roosevelt caused the company to recognize the union.

With Pinchot's approval, a special session of the Assembly ratified the Twenty-first Amendment to the federal Constitution, which repealed the prohibition amendment. The Assembly also established the Liquor Control Board, a State monopoly for the sale of liquor.

During his last year as governor, Pinchot, for the third time, ran unsuccessfully for the Republican nomination for election to the U.S. Senate. As usual, he received little assistance from the leaders of his party, whom he had greatly annoyed by supporting the economic recovery programs of Democrat Franklin Roosevelt. During the last three months of his term, the Governor was confined to a New York City hospital and Mrs. Pinchot in effect became the acting governor. In 1938, he bid again for the nomination for governor, but the Republican voters overwhelmingly defeated him. He was seventy-two.

In his remaining years, the ex-governor gave advice to the President, wrote a book about his life as a forester, and devised a fishing kit to be used in lifeboats during World War II. On October 4, 1946, he died, age eighty-one, of leukemia. The Pinchots' mansion, Grey Towers, in Milford, has been given to the U.S. Forest Service to serve as a museum and training center for foresters.

